

## Rowcliff family tree keeps spreading branches

James and Carol Rowcliff of Assumption, know more than a little about mountains of laundry and buying in bulk. He is a twin with 20 birth siblings. She is the eldest of 11 brothers and sisters. Together they raised a "small" family of seven children by birth, who are now grown and on their own. They adopted another eight children and have 18 grandkids. Yet, there is no such thing as an empty Rowcliff nest.

*"I am not afraid to help parents. I've sent them photos of children and school progress reports. Kids enjoy knowing that I am in contact with their parents."*

*—Carol Rowcliff*

They currently have two foster sons, ages eight and six. They have guardianship of two more boys, ages one and two and have four of their adopted children still living at home, ages 17, 15, 12, and 11 years old.

"The rewards are remarkable, just to see the happiness parenting can bring to each and every child. Yet,

the biggest reward is to see the smile on a child's face," Carol said.

They have seen plenty of smiles. In 27 years of foster parenting, they have opened their home to more than 100 children. That would be about a quarter of the population of James' hometown of Roberts with just 387 residents. It is difficult to say what is harder, raising children or raising crops. Although the answer may lie in the fact that James retired from farming two years ago, but is still doing foster care. In addition to managing their homestead, Carol also taught other foster parents for many years as a PRIDE trainer with Lincoln Land College.

Now their focus is on spending time with their family, especially going camping and taking vacations. When they go, everybody goes with them, making for quite a road trip. Carol also spends a lot of time on the road through Christian, Mason and Shelby counties. She and James believe in keeping their adopted children connected to their birth families, and are willing to go the distance to make it happen. Those connections are also important in foster care. They work hard to keep their foster children and their family in touch.



*James and Carol Rowcliff*

They believe that can happen 90 percent of the time.

"I have done a lot of going to birth parents homes, showing them how to prepare nutritional meals so the kids are not always eating just junk food," Carol said. "Parents can call me to see how their kids are doing. I am not afraid to help parents. I've sent them photos of children and school progress reports. Kids enjoy knowing that I am in contact with their parents."

Both James and Carol enjoy being foster parents and the children seem to like them as parents. The Rowcliffs also keep in touch with the foster children after they leave their home, as each has become a part of their family. Those roots keep getting stronger and more connected as their family continues to add new branches.

## LAN corner: Educational support in Rock Island and Mercer

*Child and Adolescent Local Area Networks (LANs) are a group of agencies, organizations, community members and individuals within a set geographic area, bringing all of the necessary and interested parties to the table to respond to the express needs of citizens within the community. This newsletter feature will regularly focus on one of the 15 LANs in Central region. In recent years, the contracts between DCFS and the LAN service providers focused on creating programs to stabilize children in their current educational settings. These programs are available to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship parents concerned about students at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion. For more information about LANs, contact Greg Hixon, DCFS LAN Liaison, at 800-602-6033 or email [greg.hixon@illinois.gov](mailto:greg.hixon@illinois.gov).*

LAN 29 covers Rock Island and Mercer counties. Several agencies have developed programs to either prevent or intervene early if students are at risk of becoming truant, being suspended, or expelled from school. These services and supports are unique in that they work with the family in a solution-oriented environment.

Catholic Charities in the Rock Island County community provides case management services to work closely with the family and student(s) who maybe at risk. This is a strength-based/solution-oriented process that teaches the family to take ownership of the outcomes. Families learn to successfully advocate for their student's needs. Nicole Sodawasser of Catholic Charities can be reached at 309-786-0770 or by email at [nsodawasser@ccdop.org](mailto:nsodawasser@ccdop.org).

has provided many struggling students a source of support and encouragement so that they could see themselves in a positive light. Clay Huffstutler of Bethany can be reached at 309-736-6622 or email [chuffstutler@bethany-qc.com](mailto:chuffstutler@bethany-qc.com).

Mercer County has a program for youth attending the Aledo and Westmer schools that provides psychological assessment and treatment for youth that are experiencing behaviors that could put them at risk of being suspended. The Mercer County Family Crisis Center has a psychologist within this program to provide these services to those students at risk. Marla Reynolds of Mercer County Family Crisis Center can be reached at 309-582-7233 or email [marla@mcfcc.com](mailto:marla@mcfcc.com).

The Rock Island/Mercer County LAN also provides case consultation, networking, and financial support for youth at risk of truancy, suspension, or expulsion. This community group meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month to provide these resources for individual referrals. Rick Johnson can be reached at 309-793-5120 or by email at [rjohnson@qconline.com](mailto:rjohnson@qconline.com).

### Central Connections

#### Sponsor

Robert Blackwell, DCFS  
Central Regional Administrator

#### Regional Reporter

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

Bethany agency provides a unique service that combines academic support with recreational activities. It is the Therapeutic Recreational Program and has been in the Rock Island/Mercer County for many years. Students spend time with staff who assist them with homework. They then participate in Life Skills discussion groups that are based on age. Topics range from anger management, positive peer interaction/socialization, responsibility, respect, and the importance of having an education. The students next participate in recreational activities and eat a healthy meal. This program

## Education Advisors help with school issues

Caregivers and caseworkers working together can usually successfully advocate with schools for the children in their care. However, when families need additional expertise to work through school issues, contact the Education Advisor. They can support DCFS-supervised foster families and families who adopted or took guardianship of children who were in DCFS care. Families with licenses supervised through private agencies can receive similar help from their agency's education liaison.

DCFS Education Advisors are part of the Northern Illinois University Educational Access Project. They work with families where children may have learning, discipline or behavioral concerns at school. They can take part in meetings for special education. The advisors will help caregivers and caseworkers determine the best strategies to help youth make successful transitions through school.

The Central Region Education Advisors offer the following reminders to help families prepare for the expenses that come with education.

- School districts have individual policies regarding the waiver of other school fees.
- School clothes are included in the monthly foster care payment to caregivers.
- Private agencies have individual policies regarding routine school supplies. Foster parents through DCFS receive \$50.00 per school age child placed in their home during the month of July on their August check.
- Transportation is free for students living more than 1-1/2 miles from school or 1 mile from public transportation, experiencing hazardous traffic conditions or receiving special education services and needing transportation. Ask your school.

### Contact an advisor

Mary Chepulis, Education Advisor  
DCFS – Springfield Sub-region  
521 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
Springfield, IL 62703  
217-782-4000 or 217-557-3985

Ann Wells, Education Advisor  
DCFS – Champaign Sub-region  
4500 So. 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
Springfield, 62703  
217-786-6847

For the Peoria sub-region, contact either of the above individuals.

## The Downs Top Notchers 4-H Group support foster care

A local 4-H group contacted Maria Levengood, a Foster Parent Support Specialist for DCFS at the Bloomington Field Office. Every year, the Downs Top Notchers help someone in the community. This year the group wanted to do something that would help foster children. Levengood made some suggestions, and the Downs Top Notchers 4-H group went to work.

They started collecting items that Levengood suggested to them. For the Bloomington Office, the group collected new brushes, hygiene items and backpacks. They made fleece blankets and collected activity books, photo albums and stuffed toys that went into in the backpacks. The 4-H group also donated gently used coats and hats, as well as videos and DVD tapes. Activity books in the backpacks will keep kids busy while they wait in the office until a placement is found.

The group also did two fundraisers and donated a significant amount to the local foster children. The donations are greatly appreciated by the staff, but most importantly by the children that come into care. Levengood noted, "...when the foster kids come into care they usually have nothing—now they have something they can call their own, thanks to the Top Notchers 4-H group."

# Central Region Training Calendar

## Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Licensing and child welfare staff are invited to attend the training if they inform the DCFS Training Office of their attendance a week prior to the training.

**Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs** (9 training hours)

**Normal**                      **BabyFold**  
Sept. 5, 12 & 19              6:30-9:30 p.m.  
(Wed)

**Quincy**                      **Blessing Hospital**  
Aug. 25 (Sat)                      9 a.m.-Noon  
and Sept. 8 (Sat)              9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse** (9 training hours)

**Rock Island**                      **Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center**  
Sept. 19 (Wed)                      6:30-9:30 p.m.  
and Sept. 22 (Sat)              9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Module 8 - Promoting Permanency Outcomes** (9 training hours)

**Mattoon**                      **Broadway Christian Church**  
Sept. 11, 18 & 25              6:30-9:30 p.m.  
(Tues)

**Module 9 - Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family** (6 training hours)

**Jacksonville**                      **DCFS Field Office**  
Sept. 15 (Sat)                      9 a.m.-4 p.m.

## Educational Advocacy

6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

**Decatur**                      **Webster Cantrell Hall**  
Oct. 2 & 9                      6-9 p.m.  
(Tue)

**Jacksonville**                      **DCFS Field Office**  
Sept. 20 & 27                      6:30-9:30 p.m.  
(Thurs)

**LaSalle/Peru**                      **Catholic Charities**  
Sept. 22                      9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
(Sat)

**Peoria**                      **Lutheran Social Svcs. of Illinois**  
Sept. 10 & 17                      6-9 p.m.  
(Mon)

## Child Trauma

4 training hrs.

This four-hour course helps caregivers recognize the signs of trauma and understand how to work with children who have experienced traumatic events.

**Normal**                      **BabyFold**                      **Springfield**                      **Ramada Limited**  
Aug. 18                      9 a.m.-1 p.m.                      Aug. 18                      9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
(Sat)                      (Sat)

**Decatur**                      **Webster-Cantrell**  
Aug 4                      9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
(Sat)

**To register to attend any of these training classes, Call the DCFS Office of Training**

**877-800-3393**  
toll free